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SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.

THIS early and distinguished circumnavigator, one of the most celebrated naval heroes who flourished in the brilliant reign of Queen Elizabeth, was born in the year 1545, near the town of Tavistock, in the county of Devon.

He went young to sea, and soon manifested an enterprising and a daring spirit. Having obtained the command of a ship, he made his name immortal by a voyage into the South Seas through the Straits of Magellan; which, at that time, no other Englishman had ever attempted. He sailed from England, on this hazardous expedition, the 13th of December 1577; and, overcoming all the various obstacles that opposed the progress of his discoveries, which are minutely detailed in the well known account of his voyages, he returned safely to his native country, and entered the harbour of Plymouth, November 3, 1580. Thus he performed this new and amazing voyage round the whole globe, in about two years and ten months; a most astonishing effort, if we duly consider the very imperfect state of navigation in those days.

But it was not only in exploring new scenes, and making important discoveries, that the abilities of this great man were conspicuous.

He was fruitful in contrivances to supply every want; and he was indefatigable to achieve what he had the sagacity to plan. To him the inhabitants of Plymouth owed particular obligations: for, in 1587, he undertook to bring water into the town; through the want of which it had, till then, been grievously distressed. This beneficial design he actually contrived to execute, by conducting thither a stream, from springs eight miles distant, in a circuitous course of about twenty.

At the time of the Spanish Armada, when even the magnanimous Elizabeth trembled for the safety of her kingdom, the fertile genius of her favourite Drake, suggested the first use of fire-ships. The happy consequence of this invention, on that glorious occasion, is known to every Briton who has the smallest acquaintance with the history of his own country. It commenced that havoc and confusion, which ended in the total destruction of the Spanish fleet.

The services of Drake were requited by his royal mistress; who, among other marks of her favour, bestowed on him the honour of knighthood.

After rendering to his country the most eminent services, as well by his bravery as by his skill; and while still busily engaged in promoting it's welfare, he died in the West Indies, on board his own ship, about the beginning of 1596, being in his fifty-first year.



